

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
August 31, 2005, 4:30 p.m. Council Chambers

PRESENT

Cindy Felsten
Jay Myers
Gil Palmer
Chrystal Pushor

ABSENT

Ian Kohen
Wes Roy
Marie Schroeder
Jason Staley
Barbara Stevens

The meeting was unofficial; a quorum was not present.

STAFF PRESENT:

Director Arlette Tinsley, Secretary Lula Young.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Director Tinsley informed Commissioners of the various meetings that both she and Deputy Director Smith had attended. Director Tinsley was a guest speaker at the BCSC Principal's retreat and taught a class on Peer Harassment this summer. Commissioner Jason Staley attended the Community Outreach with Juana Watson as the keynote speaker, hosted by Faith, Hope & Love Church.

Director Tinsley reported that she is working with BCSC and their Anti-Bullying Task Force as they implement the new state law by developing a timeline for implementation of the mandatory training that the new law requires. BCSC is bringing in certified trainers from the State Department of Education to provide the training in early October. Arlette serves on this Taskforce chaired by Karen Garrity, K-8 Curriculum Director, and they are planning the timeline. The interaction has been about implementing Best Practices and not responding to individual incidents.

Every school is now required to have a Safety Committee in each building and one of its responsibilities is the implementation of the Bullying Statute. Best practices require that at least grades 5-8, complete an annual questionnaire. Students, parents and teachers complete the questionnaire anonymously.

The questionnaire is completed before implementation of the program and continues on a yearly basis. Statistics show that bullying incidents may decrease by 50% in two years if a good anti-bullying program is implemented. BCSC will be utilizing a student engagement survey to measure the level of student engagement and feeling of safety within the high schools. The Safety Committee can include community volunteers. Each committee member will be going to the state sanctioned training for 1.5 – 2 days in early October at the Center for

Teaching and Learning. Director Tinsley advised she will be going through the training as part of the Taylorsville Elementary Safety Committee team.

Upcoming activities include two invitations to speak at a brown bag lunch at Cummins about the Commission and challenges in Columbus. Two new complaints alleging discrimination in public accommodation have been filed with the Commission.

Director Tinsley shared several training opportunities for Commissioners that she is also offering to the BCSC Diversity Committee. The Chairperson, Director & Deputy Director have met with the BCSC diversity committee at their request.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT:

Chairperson Palmer shared the success of the Columbus Police Department in recruiting two minority candidates to go through their hiring process which is not complete at this time.

OPEN FORUM:

On behalf of the membership and past leaders, the current co-leaders of the Gay/Straight Alliance: Lydia Davison, Sarah Kramer and Gene Moresca presented a plaque of appreciation to Cindy Felsten for her efforts over the past four (4) years as the Commission's Liaison to the Gay/Straight Alliance.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Director Tinsley informed Commissioners on the status of the new Commissioner applications. Council President Pro tem, Martha Myers will be facilitating the interview process as liaison Craig Hawes is in the process of being deployed to Iraq. Director Tinsley advised the application process may result in recommendations for appointment being made to the City Council September 20th.

COMMUNITY/COMMISSIONER CONCERNS:

Director Tinsley shared with Commissioners a request from Leadership Bartholomew County to assist them in recruiting for diversity for the next class scheduled to begin October 2005. Commissioners voiced their support and encouraged staff to participate if available.

Commissioners continued the general discussion by covering the 2006 proposed Human Rights budget, the Chicago Police Dept. religious diversity training and the 2006 Annual Dinner and Essay/Art Contest.

Meeting adjourned.